

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION:

A

REPRINT OF A NOTE

ON ST. JOHN iii. 3—6,

FROM

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,

BY THE REV.

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EDITED BY HIS SON,

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CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

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PREFACE.

THIS Note on Baptismal Regeneration is found only in the first edition of Dr. Townsend's Arrangement of the Old and New Testament. It was omitted from subsequent editions, because the Author purposed to publish it in an enlarged form, as a distinct and separate Treatise. His intention was never carried out, through numerous other occupations. It is now reprinted, with the Author's permission, at the earnest request, and at the sole expense, of a friend; who believes that this Note, written not for any particular purpose—nor in a moment of controversy—nor in the spirit of a partizan—but written with mature thought and deep research, in hours of cool and sober reflection, may be useful in the present day in bearing an unprejudiced and impartial testimony to what were, within a few past years, the general opinions of the Church of England divines on this subject, before the question was mixed up with the technicalities, subtleties, and party heats which now encompass it. Such was the occasion of the reprint of this Note. The Editor desires to make a few short remarks on the questions discussed in it.

The Christian religion, the one true religion, given by God to man, commencing with the first promise, and only terminating with the conclusion of the world's history; gradually unfolded in three successive dispensations; has, in each covenant, been essentially *Sacramental*. The tree of life planted in Eden was sacramental: it was an outward and visible sign, conferring the inward and spiritual grace of

life and immortality on our first parents. Immediately after the fall, the divinely-appointed institution of sacrifice was sacramental. It was the outward emblem of the continual kindness of the Creator towards the fallen; and was to them the external sign of the promises of pardon, and of forgiveness of sin. The rite of circumcision was not only the seal of admission to the Jewish covenant, but it was a sacrament. The wounding of the flesh was an outward sign, reminding the Jew of the inward grace—the circumcision of the heart, to which he was called by his submission to this rite. God has always been pleased to attach grace to the means of grace. The words on which this note is written, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,” evidently tend to unite the sprinkling of water with the baptism of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul, after his miraculous conversion and firm reception of the Gospel, is brought, under the direction of Ananias, to the waters of baptism, as the means of washing away of sin: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sin¹.” The first Gentiles to whom had been vouchsafed a visible outpouring of the Holy Ghost, were afterwards admitted by baptism into the fellowship of the Christian Church². St. Paul conjoins the use of the outward element with the bestowal of the inward blessing—“He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost³.” The Creed teaches us to believe in one baptism (for what purpose?) “for the remission of sin.” The Catechism declares that we not only receive in baptism our Christian name, but that therein we are made “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” The peculiar teaching of the Holy Scriptures, of the Church both of the Jews and of Christians, is that God hath attached grace to the means of grace:—“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

But this new doctrine of grace prevenient; of grace

¹ Acts xxii. 16.

² Acts x. 47.

³ Titus iii. 5.

going before baptism ; of grace given irrespective of the use of the outward sign appointed by God, is entirely opposed to the whole tenor of revelation, and to the analogy of teaching to be traced in the Patriarchal, the Levitical, and the Christian Church ;—as it entirely frustrates the whole necessity for sacraments ; separates the outward sign from the inward grace ; and (like the doctrine of the intention of the priest in the Church of Rome being necessary to the validity of a sacrament,) renders the outward ordinances, in many cases, nugatory, and, in all cases, uncertain. It may be indeed (and it will be) argued, that if the child is accepted, not by a grace given in baptism, but by a grace prevenient to and independent of baptism, why resort to, why use the outward ordinance at all ?

It appears to the writer of this Preface, as it is maintained in the Note which he superintends through the press, that much of the difference of opinion prevailing on the term “Baptismal Regeneration” would be avoided by a clearer defining of the terms used. The one party uses the terms in a sense totally opposite to that attached to them by others. If a dissenter even brings his child to be baptized, he believes that there is some difference after baptism in his child, as in the sight of God, to what there was before. This benefit, or difference, or grace, or χάρισμα, whatever it be, whether much or little, is called in our services by the term *regeneration*. It is a scholastic word, limited and confined by the Church of England to express that benefit conferred on the child in baptism. No one maintains that regeneration is so given in baptism as to ensure salvation, and final acceptance to the baptized child. All that is implied by the word is the incorporation of the child into the visible fold of Christ’s Church ; and the bestowal on it of that first element of grace, which must be accompanied in after life by renewal, renovation, and sanctification, for ultimate acceptance.

Some term, to denote the difference between the baptized and unbaptized child, must be adopted. We see

little infants die : and yet all death is the consequence and penalty of sin. How can this be ? These little ones have neither thought, nor spoken, nor acted : how could they have sinned ? They must have been born in sin, and have inherited from the womb the parent's sin, and the parent's punishment. As then we thus can predicate, or declare, of the unsinning, unconscious, unreflecting babe, *death*, and wrath, and condemnation, entailed by no fault of his own, but induced by his natural descent from the first Adam ; so can we, of the same unconscious, unsinning, unreflecting infant predicate, or declare, life, favour, and acceptation, without virtue of his own, in right of that sacrament of baptism, in which he obtains a mystical conjunction with the second Adam. Some term must be found to denote this blessing conferred at baptism. And then what word so suitable as the term "Regeneration," when properly defined, and limited to this first step in the divine life. This regeneration—this admission to the covenant—this incorporation into the body of Christ—this translation from the world, the visible kingdom of Satan, to the Church, the visible kingdom of God—this swallowing up of the wrath entailed by the natural descent from Adam in the grace conferred by a mystical conjunction with Christ—is evidently conferred at baptism ; while, at the same time, these blessings attached to a participation of the sacrament of baptism will profit nothing, unless they are succeeded by a growth in grace as in years ; and are developed in after life, under the blessing of God upon other means of grace, unto renovation, repentance, renewal, and sanctification. All the services of the Church of England unite in holy consistency with this teaching. She declares that the infection of sin doth remain in them that are regenerate. She prays in her Collect for Christmas Day that they who are regenerate and made children of God by adoption, may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit. The bishop, in the Confirmation Service, prays unto God, "That as He has vouchsafed to regenerate his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, so He would

strengthen them by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter ; and daily increase in them the manifold gifts of grace." The minister in the Office of Baptism returns thanks "unto Almighty God, that He hath been pleased to regenerate the newly-baptized infant, and to engraft him into the body of Christ's Church." The Church thus uses the term "Regeneration" in a limited sense, and confines it to the blessing of first admission to external communion with the body of Christ ; and to the grace, the *χάρισμα*, whatever it be, of which baptism is the instrument of conveying to the soul.

But one other question remains, viz., whether all who are baptized are regenerate. If regeneration be (as thus defined) an incorporation into the visible fold of Christ, and the bestowal of some grace, by which the baptized child is considered in a different light to the unbaptized in the sight of God—then must all who are baptized be also regenerate. Regeneration thus defined, and thus bestowed, is sacramental, and therefore universal. It is not dependent on the intention of the minister, on the promise of the sponsors, or on the subsequent faith of the child. It is the gift of God, bestowed in the use of that ordinance, which Christ has instituted as the outward channel of the conveyance of his blessing. Every child of the monarch, or of the noble, is born the heir of his ancestral honours ; and yet some among them, by their subsequent career, by their love of low companions, by their practices of every base and unworthy action, may cut themselves off from the enjoyment of their honours. So the baptized Christian, though "called to a state of salvation," and, in his unconscious infancy, "made the child of God, and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," may quench the seed of divine life, may reject his birthright, and may destroy himself. His very admission to the privileges of baptism may only aggravate his sin, and increase the weight of his condemnation.

This is the *peculiar, distinctive* teaching of the Church of England. Her education, through all her services, from baptism to burial, is the training of a baptized soul. She

appeals on all occasions to the covenant entered into at baptism; to the graces then conferred, and to the duties then undertaken. She does not speak to her children, or to her adult members, as if they were heathens, or strangers to the covenant of promise; or even as if they might become Christians. She addresses them as *Christians*; as already invested with certain privileges; and stirs them up by a remembrance of these privileges, to the due discharge of their solemn responsibilities. She speaks to them as *regenerate*, as adopted into Christ's visible fold; as possessed of certain spiritual grace, by virtue of their entrance into the covenant; and leads them forward to further steps in divine life; to the renewing of their minds; the conversion of their hearts; the amendment of their lives; and the sanctification of their souls: and to the dedication of their bodies, as a reasonable, lively sacrifice unto God.

G. F. T.

Feb. 12, 1850.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION,

&c.

THE conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, has given rise to more discussion and controversy than any other passage of the New Testament. This circumstance, indeed, ought not to excite surprise. On the interpretation of this passage depend the most important decisions, which can engage the attention of a Christian. The questions how, or when, we are first admitted into covenant with God—the necessity of the means of grace—the efficacy and meaning of the sacraments—with many more interesting considerations, are essentially connected with the interpretation given to the conversation of our Lord with one of the heads of the Jewish Sanhedrim. The occasion was such as to justify the expectation that some new and important doctrine would be revealed to the world; suited alike to the state of mind, the condition of the inquirer, and the sublimity of the Mes-

siah's character and office. This doctrine was the absolute necessity of Regeneration, or being born again.

The various interpretations given to our Lord's address may be reduced to two principal divisions: One class of Christians believes that regeneration is a spiritual change wrought upon any person, whether an infant, or an adult, in the right use of baptism, whereby he is translated from a spiritual state in Adam, to a spiritual state in Christ. They believe that regeneration is so appropriated to baptism, as to exclude any other new birth, which is not considered in conjunction with that ordinance. They believe that the water is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace which attends the administration of the sacrament of baptism: and the consequence of baptism is, that the baptized person is taken into covenant with God, and is admitted into a different state with respect to God, than he was at his natural birth. He was born a child of wrath, he is now a child of God—he is washed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and obtains the privileges of an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Another class of Christians, on the contrary, believe that regeneration is a change which takes place at some uncertain period of life, when, by the mercy of God, the heart is changed, and the sinner becomes a new man, possessed of new perceptions, affections, and dispositions; and becomes capable of employments, and satisfactions, to which he was before a stranger.

He can frequently, some assert that he can always tell, the very moment when the change was effected. This regeneration is supposed to be a general revolution in the moral nature and reasonable faculties of man, effected by the power of God's spirit in the way of creation, or miraculous operation; and as an implantation of motives or new qualities. It is the turning point from evil to good, in which a radical change of all the faculties of the soul takes place. It is as completely a new birth of the moral or spiritual part of man, as the entrance of a child into the world is the birth of the body. It is distinctly perceivable by the intellect when it commences. It is a restoration of the image of God in man, which can never be again effaced: but the favoured sinner, to whom this great blessing is imparted, is elected to holiness, as the means of salvation; and though he may sometimes sin, he shall never finally fall away and perish.

Such are the two divisions of opinion, which I have endeavoured to represent with as much impartiality as possible. Before we go on to examine them, it will be advisable to see in what points the advocates of these opinions, which are apparently so entirely reconcilable, will be found to agree. Both will acknowledge that no impenitent or profligate man who dies in his sin can be admitted into the everlasting happiness of a higher state of existence—both will acknowledge that there is no physical efficiency in the sacrament itself, but that any change which may attend it is moral or spiritual, and effected by

the mercy of a God, who being every where present, must also be present at the administration of this sacrament—both acknowledge the truth of this principal doctrine, the sum and substance of Christianity, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” whether he be baptized or unbaptized—both also will acknowledge, that while it has pleased God that grace should attend upon the means of grace, his power is not limited to those means. The question is, only whether the general law which God has revealed to man respecting the time of the new birth, is, that it takes place at baptism, or at any other period.

One chief cause of the difficulty which has attended the interpretation of this passage, is, the apparent abruptness of our Lord’s address. Some suppose ¹ that a part of the conversation is omitted. Others ²,

¹ Verba Jesu non accurate cohærere cum Nicodemi alloquio, atque hunc plura protulisse, a Johanne omissa, mihi quidem cum aliis interpretibus persuasissimum est. Neque enim facile perspicitur, quâ de causâ Jesus statim delatus sit in commemorationem eorum, quæ v. 3 continet, nisi Nicodemus alia quædam dixisset, et interrogasset, quæ Jesum, eo deduxissent. Attamen Langius in loc. contendit omnia bene cohærere, nihilque esse omissum; Jesum nimirum—cum videret Nicodemum, ne in collegarum invidiam et odium incurreret, noctu ad se venire, hâc—timiditate offensum nullâ morâ ei respondisse, qui non publice, suscipiendo baptismo, atque audiendâ meâ doctrina, profitetur, se esse meum sectatorem, eum non curo, non in numerum regni mei civium recipiam.—Kuinoel, comm. in lib. Hist. N. T. vol. iii. p. 196-7.

² Nicodemus was convinced that Christ was a divine teacher, but he did not dare to confess Him openly. On this account our Lord reproved him by his apparently abrupt address: He tells

that our Lord reproved the timidity of the Jewish teacher, by declaring immediately on the attempt of Nicodemus to begin a conversation, that whoever would be his disciple must come to his baptism, and publicly profess his religion. Others, that our Lord perceived at once the object of Nicodemus's visit, that it was to enquire concerning the Messiah's kingdom; and, in reference to this, immediately began his conversation, "Except a man be born again."—Another difficulty arises from the surprise of Nicodemus at the mention of the new birth; whereas this was a subject with which he must have been well acquainted, as the Jews were accustomed to call their proselytes, after they had been baptized, "new born children." On whatever account our Lord thus addressed Nicodemus, the purport of his conversation is evident. He relates the manner in which a man must enter the kingdom of God. On such a subject the Jewish leader must have entertained the notions which were common to his countrymen. It will be necessary, then, to understand thoroughly the object which our Lord had in view, and to ascertain what were the previous ideas of Nicodemus, respecting that change by which a man

him that all such compliance with the opinions of men must be done away. From this commencement our Lord proceeds to declare in what manner his disciples were to be admitted into his Church. With this key we may easily pass through the several parts of this conversation, which, properly considered, will be found to have a just and regular dependence upon one another.—Dr. Owen, *ap. Bowyer's Conjectures*, p. 264.

was admitted into covenant with God. It must be concluded, that as Nicodemus was a master in Israel, he must have had a thorough knowledge of the most common doctrines of his faith. If we find these to be such as were erroneous, we may conclude that our Lord would have corrected them—if imperfect, He would have pointed out their defects—if redundant or extravagant, He would have simplified and purified them. If then we can ascertain, from the decisions of the Jewish Church, whether, under the Mosaic law, the spirit of God was supposed to be separated from the means of grace, and was communicated without the observance of those means, in such manner that a man might be said to be born again, we shall have obtained some foundation for the second opinion here mentioned respecting baptism. If we find, on the contrary, that they uniformly connected the idea of a new birth with the observance of some appointed ordinance, and believe that infants were born again by circumcision, and proselytes by baptism, we may conclude the decision of the Jewish Church is in favour of the first opinion. The Jews, as well as the Christians, believed in the influences of the Holy Spirit, as firmly and implicitly as the most humble and orthodox Christian; though no mistake is more common, than the representing their belief in its influences as a new doctrine, unknown till the days of the Apostles. The prayer of David, in the fifty-first Psalm, was the uniform language of the pious Jews; and the most devout Christian could not

require a more fervent or expressive prayer, for the continued influences and daily renovation of the spiritual life, by the Holy Spirit of God. It is certain also, and Nicodemus must have been assured, that while the Spirit of God was the agent which conferred the blessing on the worshippers of God; yet it had pleased God that external ordinances should be appointed under the law, as the means by which strength of resolution, increased faith, true repentance, and all the graces of spiritual life should be imparted. It was then, as now, that he who bent his knees before God in private, offering up the prayer of the heart, left his chamber a better man than if the prayer had not been offered. Obedience produces blessing. He who attends to the means of grace will become a better Christian than he who hopes for the mercy of God, and disregards his ordinances. These truths must have been known and believed, though they were disregarded by every Jew. What then was the opinion of Nicodemus respecting the beginning of this spiritual life, and of a new birth, by which men were admitted into the kingdom of God?

The Jews believed that Abraham before his call was an idolater, but that when God called him from his father's house, it was said to him, I will make thee a new creature ³.

³ Brescith Rabba, sect. 39. fol. 38. 2. Bammidbar Rabba, sect. 2. fol. 211. 2. et Tanchuma, fol. 5. 2. Dixit R. Berachia : Deus Genes. xii. 2. non dicit ad Abrahamum ואשימך ponam

If any one shall persuade another to embrace the true religion, it is as if he had created him anew ⁴.

A priest was made a new creature, by the oil which was poured upon his head, at his inauguration into his office ⁵.

A man who is newly born does not immediately receive the spirit from above until he is circumcised. But when he is circumcised the spirit is poured upon him with a heavenly effusion. When he has become a youth, and studies the law, a greater effusion is poured out upon him. When he observes the precepts of the law, a greater effusion is poured out upon him. When he is established in life, and trains up his family in the ways of the Lord, then he becomes in all things a perfect man ⁶.

aut constituam te, sed וַאֲעֲשֶׂךָ, et faciam te בְּרִיָּה אוֹתָךְ מִשְׁאֲנֵי עוֹשֵׂי אוֹתָךְ בְּרִיָּה
namque ego te facio creaturam novam.

⁴ Dixit R. Eliezer, fil. Simra ad verba Gen. xii. 5. cur hoc loco dicitur וַאֲעֲשֶׂךָ וְאֵת הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה et animas quas fecerunt? Notandum est illos fuisse proselytos, quos ad veram religionem adduxerunt—Obj. si vel maxime intelligantur proselyti, cur tamen de illis dicitur וַאֲעֲשֶׂךָ fecerunt? Resp. Diximus exinde, quod, si quis alterum ad veram religionem perducatur, idem sit, ac si ipsum creaverit.—Schoetgenius, vol. i. p. 705.

⁵ Jalkut Rubeni, fol. 105. 1. עַל יְדֵי שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה נַעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּהֵן על ידי שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה נַעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּהֵן
per oleum unctionis Sacerdos factus est creatura nova.

⁶ Sohar Levit. fol. 39. col. 154. בָּר נֶשׁ דְּאֶתְלִיד לֹא אֶתְמַנָּא עֲלֵיהּ בָּר נֶשׁ דְּאֶתְלִיד לֹא אֶתְמַנָּא עֲלֵיהּ
&c. רוחא דלעילא עד דיתגור כיון דתגור אתער עליה רוחא אתערותא דלעילא &c.
Homo recens natus non statim accipit Spiritum supernum, donec circumcidatur. Cum vero circumcisis est, Spiritus in eum effunditur effusione coelesti. Quando autem adolescit, et Legi operam dat major effusio in illum effunditur, &c. &c.

These things were well known to Nicodemus. He must have been well acquainted also with the Jewish custom of admitting proselytes into the communion of the Jewish Church by baptism; and that in so admitting them they were called new creatures. Whence, then, proceeded his surprise at the language of our Lord—Ye must be born again—Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

We learn, from the context, that Nicodemus had seen Christ perform the miracle of cleansing the temple, and perhaps some others. He probably understood this action to be an assertion of divine power; and he came to be satisfied upon this point. The promised deliverer was now daily expected, and the establishment of his kingdom, which was believed to be both of a temporal, and yet of a spiritual nature, was immediately anticipated. Nicodemus, like the rest of his countrymen, was looking for the Messiah, or the prophet who should precede Him; and, as the learned Lightfoot observes⁷, “expected that Christ would take the Jewish people as they were, and they, without any inward change of mind and heart at all, should be translated into an outward changed condition of happiness and earthly glory, as much as they could desire or imagine. No, said our Lord; there is more required of him, and in him, that desires to see and partake of the happiness of that kingdom, and

⁷ Lightfoot's Works, folio, vol. i. p. 570.

those days : he must suffer a change in himself, and in his principles, and be as if he were born anew." Such, says the learned Lightfoot, is the connexion of this speech of Christ with that of Nicodemus.

The meaning of the speech of our Lord must be collected further from the difference between the kingdom of heaven expected by Nicodemus, and the spiritual kingdom which Christ came to establish. Perceiving the mingled feelings of doubt and veneration with which the Jewish senator approached Him, He immediately, in contradiction to the prevailing error, assures Nicodemus that his kingdom was not of the nature he supposed, and that it was necessary that a man should be born again of water and of the Spirit, to become a partaker of its privileges. As men were admitted into the Church of Moses by circumcision, so shall they be admitted into the new dispensation by baptism. As by the one rite a human being is taken into covenant with God, and is considered in a new relationship, so by the other rite the same privileges shall be given, in the new economy. You also ⁸ who are Jews, must, like the proselytes whom you receive, and the children you initiate, you also must be born again. This was the doctrine Nicodemus could not comprehend. He could not suppose that a Jew, who had already been received into covenant with God, was to be considered as a stranger, and he therefore interpreted the words

⁸ John iii. 3.

literally ⁹. To rectify the error, our Lord repeats the words, with the addition, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. You also, though a master and teacher in Israel, must not hope to partake of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom, unless you enrol yourself among the number of my disciples, be baptized in my name, and receive the influences of the Holy Spirit. Such appears to be the occasion of the words, and such their import: and the earlier fathers of the Christian Church believed, that as our Lord thus connected the waters of baptism and the operation of the Spirit—and as the Jews united certain spiritual advantages with the idea of circumcision, our Lord taught that the new birth, at the baptism of a Christian, like the new birth at the circumcision of the Jew, was produced by the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying an act of faith. The Jews, then, as the Christians at present, were accustomed to see repentance, and sudden changes from profligacy to holiness; but though they believed in the influences and powers of the Holy Spirit, they did not denominate either of these blessings by the name of a new birth. This term was confined to the initiation into a new faith, or state, or relationship. The other inestimable influences of the Spirit must be called by other names, such as renovation, which

⁹ John iii. 4.

may imply the power of the Spirit, while they exclude the idea of initiation.

The fathers of the primitive Church, as well as the ancient Jews, were accustomed to unite with baptism the idea of the new birth, and all its spiritual advantages. Thus baptism was called by various names, all of which were descriptive of some internal effect of a superior power, upon the mind of the baptized person. St. Augustine, in his controversy with the Donatists, calls it the sacrament of grace, and the sacrament of absolution¹. By others it was called, as by Cyril, the regeneration of the soul²; or, with Justin Martyr, the water of life³. Because (says Bingham, from whose authorities I am now selecting my testimonies), this new birth was wrought by the power and influence of the Spirit, therefore it was called the spiritual birth, whereby those who were carnally born to the world before, were now born spiritually to God. And so, as Optatus words it, God was hereby made the Father of men, and the holy Church their mother⁴. Gregory Nazianzen

¹ Bingham's Antiquities, vol. iv. b. 11. c. 1. Aug. de Bapt. lib. 5, c. 21, Sacramentum Gratiae dat Deus etiam per malos, &c. Baptismum vero, quod est Sacramentum Remissionis Peccatorum; nulli dubium est, habere etiam homicidas posse, &c.

² Παλιγγενεσία ψυχῆς. Cyril. Catech. præf. n. 10.

³ Ὑδωρ ζωῆς. Justin. Dial. p. 231.

⁴ Qui natus fuerat sæculo, renascitur Spiritualiter Deo. Sic fit hominem Pater Deus, sancta sic fit Mater Ecclesia. Optat. lib. 2. p. 52.

speaks also of baptism with reference to the same ideas of its excellence and vital importance. We call it, he says, the gift, and grace, and unction, or anointing of the spirit, illumination, the garment of immortality, the laver of regeneration, and whatever else is honourable and precious⁵. In addition to these testimonies, Chrysostom, the author who wrote under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, Clemens Alexandrinus, Augustine, Fulgentius, Epiphanius, and Basil, are quoted, as expressing themselves in such strong language respecting baptism, that they either assert or imply that the new birth which made a Christian the child of God, was identified with baptism, and was never distinguished or separated from that ordinance.

The learned Waterland, in his Sermon on Regeneration, has summed up the opinion of the primitive Church, and explained with great accuracy the difference between regeneration and renovation; and his statement is evidently grounded on a severe examination of their works, and a judicious induction of particulars⁶.

He first teaches us, in conformity to the opinion of

⁵ Δῶρον καλοῦμεν, χάρισμα, βάπτισμα, χρίσμα, φῶτισμα, ἀφθαρσίας ἔνδυμα, λουτρὸν παλιγγενεσίας, πᾶν ὅτι τίμιον. Naz. Orat. 40. de Bapt. p. 638.

⁶ See Bishop Bethell's statement of Waterland's argument—Treatise on Regeneration, p. 15, &c. Schoetgen. Horæ Hebraicæ, vol. i. p. 704, et p. 329.

the ancient Christians, that regeneration is a spiritual change wrought upon any person in the right use of baptism, whereby he is translated from his natural state in Adam to a spiritual state in Christ. That every one must be born of water and of the Spirit; not once of water, and once of the Spirit, but once of the Spirit in and by water; of the Spirit primarily and effectively, of the water secondarily and instrumentally. That the word regeneration is so appropriated to baptism as to exclude any other conversion or repentance, not considered in conjunction with baptism, from being signified by that name. That in an active sense it signifies our admission into a spiritual state in Christ, in a passive sense, our entrance into it; and that it carries with it the remission of sins, and a covenant claim to everlasting happiness.

He then proceeds to lay down the distinction between regeneration and renovation. He states, that they are always distinct in theory, and often, particularly in the case of infants, in fact and reality. That regeneration is a change of the whole spiritual state; renovation a change of the inward frame or disposition, which in adults is rather a qualification or capacity for regeneration than regeneration itself. That in infants regeneration necessarily takes place without renovation, but in adults renovation exists (or at least ought to exist) before, in, and after baptism.

Regeneration, he proceeds, is the joint work of the

water and of the Spirit, or, to speak more properly, of the Spirit only; renovation is the joint work of the Spirit and the man.

Regeneration comes only once, in or through baptism. Renovation exists before, in, and after baptism, and may be often repeated. Regeneration, being a single act, can have no parts, and is incapable of increase. Renovation is in its very nature progressive. Regeneration, though suspended as to its effects and benefits, cannot be totally lost in the present life. Renovation may be often repeated and totally lost.

Afterwards he illustrates this doctrine by applying it to four separate cases.

1. Grown persons, coming to baptism properly qualified, receive at once the grace of regeneration: but, however well prepared, they are not regenerate without baptism. Afterwards renovation grows more and more within them by the indwelling of the Spirit.

2. As to infants, their innocence and incapacity are to them instead of repentance, which they do not want, and of actual faith, which they cannot have: and they are capable of being born again, and adopted by God, because they bring no obstacle. They stipulate, and the Holy Spirit translates them out of a state of nature into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance. In their case, regeneration precedes, and renovation follows after; and they are the temple of the Spirit, till they defile themselves with sin.

3. As to those who fall off after regeneration, their

covenant state abides, but without any saving effect, because without present renovation; but this saving effect may be repaired and recovered by repentance.

4. With respect to those who receive baptism in a state of hypocrisy or impenitency, though this sacrament can only increase their condemnation, still pardon and grace are conditionally made over to them, and the saving virtue of regeneration, which had been hitherto suspended, takes effect, when they truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Gospel.

This clear statement of the learned author, contains an accurate representation of the grace conferred, and the change which takes place, in baptism; and this is what is meant by those divines, who maintain that regeneration is, in the strict sense of the word, the inward and spiritual grace of baptism.

The doctrine of the Church of England, on the subject of baptism, and whether regeneration is the attendant on that ordinance, must be next considered.

The first article⁷ which alludes to this doctrine is that which treats of original or birth-sin. In this article we are taught that "this infection of our nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerate;" and that "although there is no condemnation to them that believe and are baptized, yet the apostle doth confess that concupiscence or lust hath in itself the nature of sin." In this sentence the word (*renatis* or) regenerate in the Latin copy, answers

⁷ Art. IX.

to the word baptized in the English, which plainly shows that our Reformers, in compliance with the ancient doctrine, identified regeneration with baptism. We arrive at the same conclusion from considering the state of the controversy. For this part of the article is pointed at the doctrine of the Roman Church, which was established by the Council of Trent, that the whole infection of original sin is washed away, and the soul rendered altogether pure in baptism.

The fifteenth article, speaking of Christ alone without sin, says, "All we the rest (although baptized and born again in Christ) yet offend in many things;" evidently speaking of our regeneration in baptism.

In the next article likewise, which treats of sin after baptism, it is assumed, in conformity to the doctrine of the universal Church, that "we receive the Holy Ghost in baptism."

In the twenty-fifth article sacraments are defined to be "not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather certain sure witnesses and efficacious signs of grace, and God's good will towards us." This is precisely the doctrine which the ancient Christians held—that sacraments are not only signs significant or symbolical, but signs accompanied with a conveyance of grace, and a saving efficacy upon the soul: and that they are sure witnesses, testimonies, pledges, and securities of God's present and actual, and lasting good will toward us.

In the twenty-seventh article we are taught that baptism is not only a sign of profession or "a mark

of difference, but also a sign," an efficacious sign, "of regeneration or new birth," a sign through means of which the inward grace of regeneration is actually bestowed on us, in virtue of Christ's institution and promise; "whereby, as by an instrument," after the manner of a legal instrument, which makes over to a man the freedom of a public body, or his title to any property or privilege, "they that receive baptism rightly," from the proper hands, and with the proper qualifications, "are grafted into the Church, the promises of forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed," are openly ratified and made good to us, as it were by the signing and sealing of a deed or instrument. "Faith is confirmed and grace is increased," in those recipients who are capable of an increase of faith and grace, "by virtue of prayer unto God. The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church as most agreeable to the institution."

In this part of the article there can be no reasonable doubt that the meaning of the Church is (a point never doubted among orthodox Christians previous to the time of the Reformation) that every individual infant, receiving baptism rightly, partakes of those graces of which infants are capable—the new birth, incorporation into Christ, forgiveness of sin, and adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost. For, independently of the argument for infant baptism drawn from the analogy between Christian baptism

and Jewish circumcision, baptism was instituted for the salvation of sinners; and since infants are born in sin and stand in need of forgiveness, and are capable of grace and salvation, it is most agreeable to the institution that they should be baptized, in order that they may partake of the Gospel promise, and be saved or regenerated, without respect of persons, in the way which Christ has appointed.

In the different offices for the administration of baptism, the same doctrine is taught with particularity and plainness, and a studied conformity to the language and opinions of the ancient Christians. Previous to the sacramental act the person to be baptized is represented as not regenerate, but from the moment that the ceremony has been performed, he is pronounced regenerate, without a hint or suspicion of any reserve, or of any doubt existing in the minds of the minister or the congregation. We are first told, that "all men are conceived or born in sin," and that "none can enter into the kingdom of God unless they be regenerate, and born anew of water and of the Spirit;" and are therefore besought to call upon that God that the infant "may be baptized with water and with the Holy Ghost." Accordingly the congregation joins with the minister in praying "that he, coming to God's holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration, and that God will give his Holy Spirit to him, that he may be born again, and made an heir of everlasting salvation:" and God is intreated to "sanctify the water to

the mystical washing away of sin." As soon as the child has been baptized, and received into the congregation, the minister solemnly pronounces him "regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ," and the congregation returns thanks to God, for having been "pleased to regenerate him with his Holy Spirit, to receive him for his own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into his holy Church."

In the office for receiving children privately baptized into the Church, instead of praying God to "give his Holy Spirit to the infant that he may be born again," we beseech Him to "give the infant his Holy Spirit, that he, being born again," that is, having been already born again, when he was baptized, "may continue his servant, and attain his promises:" plainly expressing our firm persuasion that baptism is the point in which the new birth takes place.

In short, these offices, with undeviating consistency, unequivocally exhibit the doctrine of regeneration in baptism, and are compiled in strict conformity to the language and sentiments of the ancient Churches. Indeed the views which they present to us, of the connexion between this sacrament and the new birth, and of the opinion of our Reformers on this head of doctrine, are most clear and explicit; and appear scarcely to leave any opening for cavils and disputes upon the subject.

In the Catechism it is affirmed, that we "are made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of

the kingdom of heaven in baptism :” that a sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us,” and that this sign or sacrament is “ordained by Christ Himself as a means,” that is, an instrumental cause, or instrument of conveyance, “whereby we receive the same” inward grace, “and a pledge to assure us” of its collation : and that the inward and spiritual grace of baptism is “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness ;” the forgiveness of sin, implying the promise of power to resist and overcome it, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as the principle of a new life of righteousness. In proof of this, we are reminded that “being by nature born in sin, and children of wrath, we are made children of grace,” children of God, and partakers of his grace, by baptism. For if we are born in sin and children of wrath, we cannot become children of grace by baptism, unless we receive the forgiveness of sin, and a new principle of righteousness, in the right use of that sacrament.

In the office of confirmation, the regeneration of the parties before the bishop, and the forgiveness of their sins in baptism, are directly and unequivocally asserted. “Almighty God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given them forgiveness of all their sins ; strengthen them, we beseech thee, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter.” And precisely in the same manner, we intreat God in the Collect for Christmas Day, that “we being regenerate,” that is,

having been born again, “and made his children by adoption and grace, may be daily renewed by his Holy Spirit.” For since the Liturgy every where teaches and assumes our adoption and regeneration in baptism, and never uses the word except in reference to baptism, the supposition that in this prayer the congregation is contemplated as unregenerate, and that we are praying for some other regeneration and adoption, is totally inconsistent with sound and just principles of interpretation.

From a review then of the Articles and Liturgy we may derive the following conclusions.

1. They maintain the doctrine of regeneration in baptism in the most decided and unrestricted manner, grounding it on the same texts of Scripture, from which the ancient Christians had deduced it: including under it the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven: and never introducing the word itself except in conjunction with baptism.

2. They teach, in common with the writings of the ancient Christians, the necessity of faith and repentance as qualifications for the salutary effects of baptism. But they never contemplate any person, however qualified, as regenerate, till he is actually baptized.

3. They suppose that infants, who are necessarily free from actual sin, are duly qualified for baptism, and are looked on by God precisely in the same light as penitents and believers: and they unequivocally

assert that every baptized infant without exception is born again.

4. They suppose that all baptized persons, whether infants or adults, contract a solemn engagement to holiness and newness of life; and that their continuance in the state of salvation to which they are called depends on their future conduct.

5. They lay down a very plain and broad distinction between this grace of regeneration, and conversion, repentance, renovation, and such Christian virtues and changes of the inward frame, as require the concurrence of man's will and endeavours, imply degrees, and are capable of increase.

The Reformers of the Church of England, and foreign divines, afford the same testimony as is here given from Bishop Bethell's admirable and conclusive treatise.

If it be said that this doctrine of baptismal regeneration is inconsistent with reason, and that it is impossible that the mere sprinkling of the human body with water, can be attended with a change so important, we may observe, that the characteristic or peculiar doctrines of Christianity are addressed exclusively to our faith.

Christ's hearers were required to believe upon the strength of those evidences that were before them, and in direct opposition to their popular prejudices and prepossessions, that He was the Messiah, or He that should come into the world. In the same manner the doctrines which relate to his person and

the purposes of his mission ; his Godhead and incarnation, redemption, atonement, sanctification by his spirit, the resurrection of the body, and the circumstances of the last judgment, are proposed to our faith ; and the benefit which we are to derive from them depends in a great measure upon the steadfastness of our belief in their certainty. What is the exact nature of the union between God and man in our Saviour's person ; how the death of Christ atones for our sins, and purges our consciences from dead works ; by what physical process the Holy Ghost acts upon the human soul ; are questions with which we have no concern. If the truths themselves are plainly revealed in Scripture, and Scripture contains the word of God, we must receive them with the same assurance as if we could analyse and expound them with the most minute accuracy, and penetrate into the secret parts of the divine economy. But the doctrine of regeneration in baptism stands precisely on the same footing with these weighty truths, and harmonizes with the whole scheme of revealed religion. It is proposed to our belief, and is intended to be a test and exercise of it : it demands of us the same kind of assent, which we owe to the other peculiar doctrines of Christianity ; and it is our business to believe it in the simplicity with which it is taught us, without attempting to unravel God's mysterious operations on the soul, and without being offended at the meanness of the instruments, through which pardon and grace are made over to us.

But farther. Regeneration in baptism, implying this close connexion between the grace bestowed and the sign which denotes it, is an act of tenderness and mercy, not less worthy of God's infinite benevolence, than analogous to the whole course of his dealings with man. Goodness indeed, I am persuaded, is the leading feature of his government, and the key to his mysterious dispensations : and those theological systems, which straiten his goodness, and depend principally on abstract views of his sovereignty and glory, will be found on investigation to have no foundation in his word, nor in the history and experience of mankind. But if man, considered as an alien from God and a child of wrath, had been left to collect the assurance of adoption into his family, and restoration to his favour, in the best way that he was able, without any specific form or positive consignation of these privileges and blessings ; he would have been placed, as it were, without chart or compass, in a troubled sea of doubt, suspense, and anxiety, and would have been tempted to resort to fanciful and absurd criterions of sonship and reconciliation. But on the principles which the Church deduces from Scripture, he receives in the sacrament of baptism such comfortable assurances of God's favour and loving-kindness, as are sufficient, if duly prized and religiously pondered, to bring peace to his mind, and to invigorate his soul to duty. For on these principles the convert to the faith of Christ, who receives baptism rightly, may assure himself, that as certainly as God is true, and

his *promises in Christ are yea, and amen*; so surely he is released from the bond and penalty of his sins, endowed with the earnest of the Holy Ghost, as a principle of new life and holy endeavour, and enrolled among the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. On the same principles the parent will “not doubt, but earnestly believe,” that his child, who was “born in sin and in the wrath of God, is by the laver of regeneration in baptism received into the number of his children, and heirs of everlasting life^s.” Here we rest on sure ground. And the very fact, that regeneration in baptism (supposing the truth of the doctrine) is a strong evidence

^s Vide Waterland’s Sermon on Regeneration—Bp. Bethell’s General View of the Doctrine of Regeneration in Baptism—Scott’s Bible, on John iii.—Gill’s, ditto, and the various commentators—the tracts on each side in the late controversy, between Mr. Scott, of Hull, Archbishop Lawrence, &c. &c., and the many publications referred to by Doddridge, in his lecture on this subject. Archbishop Lawrence and Bp. Bethell appear to have settled the controversy. Mr. Morgan’s tract, too, is very valuable. See also the sermons of Mr. Nolan, on the Operations of the Holy Ghost. For the various opinions of many of the Reformers, and most learned theologians on this subject, see Witsius, *Miscellanea Sacra, Exercitatio XIX. de Efficacia et Utilitate Baptismi in Electis foederatorum parentum infantibus*. Witsius considers that the children of pious parents, who are baptized, are to be considered as elect and holy, till they prove themselves to be otherwise, by their conduct in after life—*eam piis parentibus fiduciam fecit Deus, ut infantes suos, tanquam Dei per gratiosam adoptionem filios, intueri iis liceat; donec provectiones facti contrariis se indiciis prodant; utque de eorum in infantia morientium salute securi esse queant, non minus quam olim Abrahamus, et Isaacus*. Witsii *Miscel. Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 615. Exer. XIX.

of God's goodness and condescension to fallen man, forms a probable presumption of its truth, since it proves that it is reasonable in itself, suitable to our wants, and analogous to the general course of the divine economy.

What is contended then is, that regeneration, according to the language and doctrine of Scripture, and our own Church, is a mystical change of spiritual condition, and relationship to God, implying in capable subjects a moral or practical change, already begun, and requiring from all baptized persons a moral change and improvement: and that it is not a mystical renewal of the inward frame, a mystical or miraculous change of man's moral nature, qualities, and habits.

THE END.

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